



State of Connecticut

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Testimony in Support of House Bill Number 5949 **Transportation Committee** **February 11, 2015**

Chairmen Guerrero and Maynard, Ranking Members O'Dea and Boucher and Members of the Transportation Committee, the House Republican Caucus would like to thank the Committee for raising House Bill Number 5949: An Act Requiring a Priority System for Transportation Infrastructure Projects.

This bill is an important proposal to require the Department of Transportation (CTDOT) to create a system by which projects are prioritized in order to focus on, and give higher priority to, existing transportation infrastructure and replacement of roads and rails, as opposed to developing and pursuing new projects.

Now more than ever, the condition of our state's transportation infrastructure is taking center stage and has already been announced as a major focus of the Malloy Administration for this legislative session. However, we cannot afford to spread our limited resources too thin by funding new transportation projects at the expense of existing roads, bridges and rail service. While "Fix-It-First" and similar programs have helped in the past, we need to give even more focus, attention, and priority to maintaining and upgrading the extensive infrastructure we already have.

Our current transportation system continues to deteriorate. According to data produced by the Federal Highway Administration,¹ 9% of all CT bridges are structurally deficient, meaning that at least one or more of its major components are in poor condition, and over 25% of all CT bridges are functionally obsolete, meaning they are outdated and fail to meet current bridge standards. Over the past 9 years, the number of structurally deficient bridges in Connecticut

¹ <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/bridge/deficient.cfm>, data as of December 2014.

has actually increased from 8.5% to 9%. As of March 31, 2014 (the latest data available),² only 91.4% of Connecticut bridges are considered in a State of Good Repair (SGR). This percentage is on a slight downward trend declining 1% over the past 5 years, and an additional of 9-12 bridges per year become deficient due to the state's aging infrastructure. CTDOT has allocated additional resources for bridge maintenance and preservation projects, but it will take several more years for these additional projects to be completed, bridge inspections to occur, and the results seen.

Unfortunately, the condition of our state's bridges isn't the only thing that's deteriorating at an alarming rate. According to a report produced by the Regional Plan Association, the railroad line between New Haven and Greenwich needs \$3.6 billion in additional funds to rebuild its infrastructure.³ At the current rate of investment – approximately only \$200 million per year – it would take 20 years to bring the New Haven Line back up to standard.

Not only do we have a problem with deteriorating infrastructure – the capacity of our existing highways has failed to keep up with the growth of our population. Over a period of 5 years (1999-2004), studies conducted by the CTDOT concluded that additional capacity is necessary on I-95 between Branford and Stonington at a cost in 2004 dollars of \$1.5 billion, and a third lane in both directions on I-84 between Danbury and Waterbury would cost between \$3 and \$4 billion.

We cannot expect our already-limited transportation funds to cover all of these costs, especially in light of declining gas tax revenues and an estimated 87% reduction in federal transportation funds. We have to be smarter about the use of the transportation dollars the public has entrusted to us. We can do that by focusing our resources more intently on fixing and maintaining what we already have.

I urge the Transportation Committee to pass House Bill Number 5949 to require the Department of Transportation to prioritize the maintenance of existing transportation infrastructure rather than pursuing new projects. Please allow the full General Assembly the opportunity to debate this issue and to pass legislation to repair our state's transportation system.

² http://www.ct.gov/dot/lib/dot/documents/dperformancemeasures/ctdot_2014-q1-performancemeasures_20140929.pdf

³ "Getting Back On Track: Unlocking the Full Potential of the New Haven Line," January, 2014. <http://library.rpa.org/pdf/RPA-Getting-Back-on-Track.pdf>